DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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STATEMENT BY SECRETARY RUSK

On this twelfth anniversary of the signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, SEATO members have cause, with all due modesty, to take satisfaction in what the Treaty has accomplished. Behind the shield which the SEATO Treaty has helped to interpose, SEATO members have enjoyed freedom from overt Communist aggression. Under the energetic leadership of SEATO's distinguished Secretary General, Jesus Vargas, SEATO is pressing forward toward its objectives of peace, freedom and progress.

Despite these encouraging developments, Communist aggression remains a major threat which must be guarded against in 1966 as in 1954. This threat has been met and is being turned back in Viet-Nam where the Vietnamese people are making a determined defense of their freedom against the attack from Hanoi. Five SEATO members -- Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States -- and one non-SEATO member, Korea, are aiding the Vietnamese people with military contributions, and SEATO members also are providing material assistance in increasing volume.

For our part, we are determined to fulfill our obligations under the SEATO Treaty, and to demonstrate that aggression in the Treaty Area, whether overt or by means of guerrillas and subversion, cannot prevail. At the same time, equally mindful of the desire of all the SEATO members to live in peace with all peoples and all governments, we shall leave no stone unturned in our effort to start the negotiations for a peaceful end to the conflict which will assure free choice to the people of South Viet-Nam.

Today, in the Treaty Area, as the recent SEATO Council Meeting at Canberra noted, a new spirit of mutual interest and cooperation is emerging. The countries of the Pacific area, jointly and individually, are turning their attention to the struggle that they really want to wage -- the struggle for better health, food, housing and education. In this struggle, each country has something to contribute and each has something to receive. In this heartening work, SEATO can make a special contribution while striving toward its objectives in the years ahead.

On this anniversary day, therefore, I send greetings on behalf of my countrymen to our SEATO allies. The United States can be counted upon to do its full share in the common tasks to which SEATO is committed.

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